



State of Connecticut
SENATE
SENATOR DANTÉ BARTOLOMEO
Thirteenth District

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 488
Committee on Transportation Public Hearing
February 9, 2015

Chairman Maynard, Chairman Guerrero, members of the Transportation Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 488, An Act Concerning Availability of the Drug and Alcohol Education Class Required For an Operator's License.

I co-introduced this bill with Representative Michelle Cook on behalf of my constituent, Mr. Michael Ash, who has decades of experience as a Driving Education Instructor here in Connecticut and has effectively communicated with me the importance of such a bill.

Proposed Senate Bill 488 aims to remedy several concerns with regard to the mandatory eight-hour safe-driving-practices class, which includes four hours of drug and alcohol education that is required for all new license applicants regardless of their age.

This mandatory class typically costs \$150 at driving schools, which is a burden for those adults who are low income and/or unemployed. The lack of a driver's license can negatively impact one's ability to secure meaningful employment because it limits the jobs for which individuals are eligible and to which they can commute. This can create a Catch-22 situation for many people: While they need a license to find meaningful work, they also need an income to pay for the fees necessary to take the requisite class.

Our bill addresses these concerns in a variety of ways. It would allow independent certified driver education instructors to teach applicants at low or no cost by holding class in adult education facilities, nonprofit organizations or municipal outlets, if they so choose. Concentrated effort could be given to providing instruction in locations convenient to the majority of those who feel disenfranchised by our current system.

Proposed SB 488 also would ensure that Connecticut driving students would have access to reasonably priced online options such as those offered or allowed by other states, including New York, California, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania.

In order for a minor to receive their Connecticut driver's license, the current protocol requires that a parent be in attendance for two hours of the safe driving practices class. This presents a burden for working parents who must take time off from their job to attend a structured classroom session.

In addition, parents with multiple children must repeat the session for each child's driving training. As a note from personal experience, this accounted for a portion of the total \$600 fee charged for my oldest son's driver education. At \$150 per child for just this part of the overall training, for many families the burden of our current system is undeniable.

Although not included originally in Proposed SB 488, I now suggest that a parent's attendance at one child's session be considered valid for three years so that the parent does not have to attend multiple sessions with that child's siblings during a relatively short timeframe. I believe it is reasonable to assume that the content would not change dramatically in just three years.

In the interest of fairness to all citizens throughout Connecticut, while still ensuring that our residents have the requisite training to be safe and effective drivers, I urge you to report SB 488 favorably out of Committee.